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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

Three times over a span of approximately twenty years the Pepperdine Lectures have been devoted to psalm studies. The last instance took place this past year (2011). Looking back at what *Leaven* published previously, we wondered if there might be a duplication of effort. The answer is “no.” We are grateful for these three opportunities to study the book of Psalms and with thanksgiving we present to our readers the current issue.

First, there are four articles that grew out of the *Leaven* Symposium, authored by **BRANDON L. FREDENBURG**, **JOHN T. WILLIS**, **ASHLEY GAY** and **SARA BARTON**. **FREDENBURG** writes of the “world-making power of the psalms.” What he means is that the psalms have power—“their world is life lived as faith and faith lived as life.” What he means also is that the psalms “began as prayer-songs of lived reality and, when written and sung again in community, they evoke a new reality. This is their power.” **WILLIS** emphasizes a “proper approach to the book of Psalms” that necessitates “three considerations simultaneously: (1) an in-depth study of each psalm; (2) continual reflection on the relationship of each psalm to the psalms around it; and (3) the function of each psalm within the entire Psalter.” As we teach and preach from the Psalter we must remember that the editors of the Psalter “carefully connected each psalm in a meaningful theological arrangement.” **GAY** looks at the Psalter through the eyes of “aesthetic encounters.” This is a fresh and creative approach building on the work of Elaine Scarry. Gay’s point is that “aesthetic encounters are inseparable from ethical concerns” and “serve as primers for enacting justice.” Finally, **BARTON** explores the theme of the spirituality of the book of Psalms, utilizing the work of Walter Brueggemann as her guide. The pay-off for Barton came when she used her insights from the “language of seasons and life” and applied them in a classroom setting with urban teenagers who came to her to take college level courses at Rochester College.

Drawing from the Pepperdine Lectures beyond the *Leaven* Symposium, we invited two presenters of difficult texts to share their work to our readers. **TIMOTHY M. WILLIS** explores the question of how psalm passages are “fulfilled” in the New Testament. His study challenges the popular outlook by modern Christian apologists “that a primary purpose of prophecy is to establish the reliability of the biblical witnesses.” He admits the complexity of his task and, therefore, considers only one Old Testament passage (Ps 16.8–11) cited by both Peter and Paul in their first recorded sermons in the book of Acts (2.25–31; 13.35–37). **KEVIN J. YOUNGBLOOD** takes up a difficult classification of psalms known as “imprecatory prayers.” His paper paves the way for Christians to read and not neglect these psalms. Yes, they express “raw, intense, violent,” prayers, and yes, they are full of bitter invectives, but the psalmists rest their prayers in the hands of God who alone is the exerciser of vengeance in the midst of suffering for unjust treatment.

A third contribution of the Pepperdine Lectures to our overarching theme is the inclusion of a sermon and a short resource reading guide of the book of Psalms. We chose the sermon of **JOSH GRAVES**, whose keynote address was based on Psalm 100. His point is that we need to sing Psalm 100 as doxology not only from the “peaks” of our lives, but also from the vantage point of the valleys because the psalmist teaches us from the perspective of “one who’s endured and survived.” Put in other words, Graves asks, “Can you sing it

[Psalm 100] from the dark places? Can you sing it from the shadow-lands?" For our "Short Resource Guide for Exploring the Psalms" we turned a second time to **BRANDON L. FREDENBURG**. **FREDENBURG** provides a valuable reading guide for at least two reasons. First, he builds on the guide written by Paul Watson in 1999, providing a nice update to the quality suggestions Watson made. Second, **FREDENBURG** organizes his suggested bibliography in useful categories for those of us who seek further reading. Teachers and preachers can benefit greatly from his organization. Thus, having the two guides (1999 and 2011) is quite valuable for those who read and use *Leaven*.

Stepping away from the book of Psalms, we included two quite different articles. First, **RON HIGHFIELD** explores the "scope and character of God's providence." He does not seek an academic discussion. Rather, his objective is to touch "us where we live every day." This is a valuable article that I hope all of our readers consider. Finally, we turn from the spiritual world of adults to the many youth in our churches. **CALEB S. CAGE** writes a spiritually sensitive letter to Amanda, a young person who was recently baptized in the congregation where he serves as a youth minister. We believe the content of this letter would be worthy reading for young people in all of our churches.

Continue to pray for *Leaven*. Our final issue of the year will be devoted to the Gospel of Luke, guest edited by Kindy Pfremmer DeLong as an outgrowth of the 2011 Christian Scholars' Conference held at Pepperdine University. Thus, in one year we will have treated each of the Synoptic Gospels—Mark, Matthew and Luke. Hopefully, we will open 2012 with an issue on the book of Hebrews, guest edited by Ira Jolivet Jr.

